

memorandum

DATE: September 26, 2011

REPLY TO
ATTN OF: KEP-4

SUBJECT: Supplement Analysis for the Transmission System Vegetation Management Program FEIS (DOE/EIS-0285/SA-450- Flathead-Hot Springs Transmission Line Corridor)
Project No. PP&A 2084

to: Joe Johnson
Natural Resource Specialist – TFS/Kalispell

Proposed Action: Vegetation Management along the Flathead-Hot Springs #1 230-kV transmission line corridor right-of-way (ROW)

Location: The project is located in Flathead, Lake and Sanders counties, Montana.

Proposed by: Bonneville Power Administration (BPA)

Description of the Proposal: BPA proposes to remove tall growing and noxious vegetation from the ROW, structure sites and access roads that can potentially interfere with the operation, maintenance, and reliability of the transmission line. All vegetation management activities will be performed in accordance with the BPA Master Agreement Statement of Work for Vegetation Control on Bonneville Power Administration Transmission Line Rights-of-Way and in accordance with the specific details identified in the vegetation management checklist and detail/prescription sheet.

Tall growing and noxious vegetation and reclaim trees will be removed and/or controlled inside the ROW using selective and nonselective methods that may include hand cutting, mowing, and herbicidal treatment. Danger trees adjacent to the ROW will also be removed and/or controlled. Low growing vegetation will be protected along the ROW, with the exception of brush at the base of transmission structures, tower sites, and within access roads.

Debris disposal will be a combination of lop and scatter, mulching, and mechanical chipping. Treatment will begin in 2011 and the transmission line ROW, structure sites and access roads will be maintained on a 7-to-10 year cycle. For portions of the ROW located in Flathead County, the county under contract with BPA will control noxious weeds as needed on a yearly cycle.

The proposed action will allow safe and timely access to the transmission line, which will help reduce outage times and maintain reliable power in the region. All work performed will be in accordance with the National Electrical Safety Code and BPA safety standards.

Analysis: A Vegetation Management Checklist was completed for this project in accordance with the requirements identified in BPA's Transmission System Vegetation Management Program FEIS (DOE/EIS-0285, May 2000) and adopted in the Record of Decision (July 2000).

Land along the project corridor consists of rural, industrial forest managed lands, Forest Service managed lands (Flathead National Forest), and Tribal Lands (Salish and Kootenai Tribes). Primary uses for lands within the project area include timber production, grazing, game hunting, and recreational uses. The ROW also crosses several streams which should be considered fish bearing.

Section 3 of the checklist identifies the natural resources present in the area of the proposed work. The following summarizes natural resources occurring in the project area along with applicable mitigation measures.

Water Resources: Various water resources (streams, rivers, lakes, wetlands, etc.) are located within ½ mile of the ROW and have the potential to be fish bearing. Therefore, the following conservation and avoidance measures will be observed to the maximum extent possible during project activities. Trees and brush in riparian zones will be selectively cut to include only those that are in violation of current BPA ground to conductor clearance electrical safety standards. Trees will be topped where shrubs are not present to provide shade and a silt buffer. No ground disturbing vegetation management methods will be implemented, thus minimizing the risk for soil erosion and sedimentation near water bodies. Only BPA-approved herbicides using the specified buffer width from the edge of any water resource will be used for stump treatment. No drinking water, irrigation wells, or water supplies were identified along the ROW.

T&E Species and Habitats: Pursuant to its obligations under the Endangered Species Act, BPA has made a determination of whether its proposed project will have any effects on any listed species. A species list was reviewed from the United States Fish and Wildlife Service in September 2011, identifying threatened and endangered species and Critical Habitat Units potentially occurring in the project area. In addition, a review of species under the jurisdiction of the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Fisheries was conducted. The following species were identified as occurring within ½ mile of the project area: bull trout and Canada lynx. By implementing the conservation and avoidance measures mentioned in the Effects Determination for this project, a determination of "No Effect" was made for all ESA listed species, designated critical habitat and Essential Fish Habitat waters that occur in the project area.

Cultural Resources: Vegetation management activities are not anticipated to affect cultural resources. The Tribal Historic Preservation Officer for the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation previously indicated there were no concerns other than performing the work when it is hot and dry to keep identified culturally sensitive areas from being damaged. If archaeological material is discovered during the course of vegetation management activities, all work will be halted and the tribe, the BPA Environmental Representative and the BPA archeologist will be notified.

Monitoring: The ROW identified in the checklist will be inspected after completion of the work to determine if all target vegetation has been removed from these areas. Follow up monitoring

for vegetation control will combine work in progress inspections and/or next-season site reviews to determine the effectiveness of control methods.

Findings: This Supplement Analysis finds that (1) the proposed actions are substantially consistent with the Transmission System Vegetation Management Program FEIS (DOE/EIS-0285) and ROD, and; (2) there are no new circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns and bearing on the proposed actions or their impacts. This Supplement Analysis also finds the proposed actions will not affect threatened or endangered species. Therefore, no further NEPA documentation is required.

/s/ Philip W. Smith, for:

Michael A. Rosales

Physical Scientist - Environmental

CONCUR: /s/ Katherine S. Pierce

Katherine S. Pierce

NEPA Compliance Officer

DATE: September 26, 2011

Attachments:

Vegetation Management Checklist

Effects Determination